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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS.

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FEB. 14, 1886. THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL. Dan. v., 1-12 and 25-28.

We have no space for a full discussion of the historicity and the literary character of the Book of Daniel; but two or three points particularly demand notice.

The book, as it stands in the Hebrew, is made up of three parts. First comes the account of the education of Daniel and his three companions, chapter I. Then follow five stories of wonderful deeds or deliverances, wrought for or through these men, chapters II. to VI. The remaining chapters constitute a series of visions and predictions. The first of the five stories which constitute the second part of the book includes the prediction of the successive kingdoms of gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay, and to that extent stands on a different footing from the other four stories.

The element of prediction is more marked in Daniel than in any other Old Testament book. Daniel is called a prophet in the New Testament, and by Josephus and other Jewish writers. The book is placed among the books of the later prophets, in the common English versions of the Bible. These facts ought to give point to the additional fact that the Hebrew Bibles do not reckon Daniel among the prophetic books. If one regards prophecy as equivalent to prediction, this is a strange peculiarity in classifying the books. Many scholars, assuming that prophecy and prediction are equivalent terms, explain this strange peculiarity by reasons that are still more strange. The fact is that prophecy and prediction are not equivalent terms, prediction being merely one element of prophecy. The fact is that Israelite doctrine, as it appears in the New Testament and in contemporaneous writings, attributes the Law and the Hagiographa, equally with the Prophets, to men endowed with the prophetic gift, and regards the element of prediction as belonging alike to all three. The fact is that the Book of Daniel is in a different class from the so-called prophetic books, because it belongs to a wholly different sort of writings. The books of the earlier prophets are made up of didactic selections from the pre-exilic history of Israel; the books of the later prophets are collections of distinctly homiletic addresses and poems (Jonah being partially an exception); the Book of Daniel is of a different character from either of these, and therefore belongs to a different class.

The predictive portions of Daniel have commonly been held to include predictions of the Roman power, and of events extending far into modern history. At present, however, the tendency is to regard these predictions as terminating with the times of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees; but it is by no means settled that this is the final interpretation.

Men who hold that the predictive portions of Daniel terminate with the Maccabean times, and who disbelieve in the reality of supernatural inspiration, of course hold that the book was written after the Maccabean wars, and contains a history of those wars, in the literary form of visions said to have been seen in

Daniel's time. This argument for the late origin of the book would have no weight with those who hold the received doctrines as to inspiration. In further proof of its late origin, it is urged that the book contains evidences of Greek influence, Greek names of musical instruments, for example. But there is no absurdity in the idea that Greek minstrels and other Greeks may have made their influence felt among the luxurious classes in Babylonia, as early as the times of Nebuchadnezzar. And a similar disposition may easily be made of the other reasons commonly urged for holding that the book was written long after the time of Daniel.

Against the historicity of the book many considerations have been urged, independently of the question of its date. It has been said, for example, that its Belshazzar is a myth; that he is not mentioned in other histories of these times; that the king of Babylon, when Cyrus captured it, was Nabonidus, and therefore could not have been Belshazzar; that he is known to have been at that time in Borsippa, and not in Babylon. Until a few years ago, our answers to these objections were purely conjectural; they consisted, not in explaining the difficulties, but in explaining how they might, perhaps, be explained. We now know positively, from inscriptions that have been recovered, that Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus, and that no statement made concerning him in the Book of Daniel is at all improbable.

In like manner, it has been alleged that Darius the Mede is a mythical personage, unknown to profane history; and that profane history makes the reign of Cyrus to have begun immediately upon his taking of Babylon, and therefore leaves no room for Darius the Mede. The reply to this must still be conjectural; but amply sufficient conjectural replies are not difficult to make.

It has been further alleged that the chronology of the book is self-contradictory. In i., 21, it is said that Daniel continued till the first year of Cyrus, while in x., 1, we have an account of visions which he saw in the third year of Cyrus. But the first of these two statements does not necessarily imply that he lived *only* to the first year of Cyrus. The intention of the author may have been to call attention to the fact that, as Daniel participated in the events of the beginning of the seventy years of exile, so he saw the close of the seventy years, in the first year of Cyrus; this would be a fact worth stating, even if Daniel lived for many years longer. Or it may be that the two passages refer to the same year, designating it in two different ways; that it was the third year of Cyrus, according to the account now commonly received, which assigns to Cyrus nine years, beginning with the conquest of Babylon, but his first year, according to a different way of counting, which assigned the first two of the nine years to Darius the Mede, and only the last seven to Cyrus. Either of these explanations is sufficient.

It has also been alleged that the dates in Daniel contradict those of other history; and especially, that Dan. i., 1 is contradictory to Jer. xxv., 1, and to a host of corroborative passages in sacred and profane history. But we have already found (STUDENT for January, 1886, p. 225) that this contradiction does not exist; and that, on the contrary, the numeral in Daniel explains what would otherwise be difficult to understand, namely, the proper beginning and end of the seventy years of exile. The year in which Daniel was carried away, the third of Jehoiakim, was the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar, who was already king in that year, though the year counted as the first of his reign began with the following new year. From this third year of Jehoiakim to the third of the nine years of

Cyrus (both years included) is exactly seventy years; to the first of the nine years of Cyrus, it is seventy years, nearly enough for the purposes of a round number.

These and various other considerations seem to me abundantly to prove that the Book of Daniel, as a whole, is historical. We must not even touch the special questions that arise concerning certain parts of it. It would not have been justifiable to give so much space to the general questions, except for the light thereby thrown upon the following lessons.

FEB. 21. THE SECOND TEMPLE. Ezra I., 1-4 and III., 8-13.

FEB. 28. NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER. Neh. I., 1-11.

MARCH 7. READING THE LAW. Neh. VIII., 1-12.

We can attempt nothing more, in these lessons, than to set forth clearly the historical connection of the facts they contain. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah practically constitute one historical work, along with the Books of Chronicles, covering the history of Judah from the beginning to the close of the times treated of in the Old Testament. The writer of Chronicles closes his work with the sentences with which Ezra begins, as much as to say that, having brought up his history to the point already treated of in the Book of Ezra, his task is done. This seems to indicate that the Book of Ezra, as a whole, was written earlier than the Book of Chronicles as a whole. Other evidence confirms this conclusion.

To understand the post-exilic history, as found in Ezra and Nehemiah, we need to get distinctly in mind the fact that the narrative is not continuous, but is an account of things that occurred at four important epochs, with wide intervals of time left without mention. We need also to have distinctly in mind the succession of the Persian kings for the period, as the biblical events are dated by the years of these kings. Let us notice first the succession of the kings, and then the epochs in the history. The kings were as follows :

Cyrus 9 years, B. C. 538-530,
 Cambyzes 8 years, B. C. 529-522,
 Comates, or Pseudo-Smerdis, a few months, not counted in the chronology,
 Darius Hystaspis 36 years, B. C. 521-486,
 Xerxes 21 years, B. C. 485-465,
 Artaxerxes Longimanus 41 years, B. C. 464-424,
 Darius Nothus, or Ochus, 19 years, B. C. 423-405,
 Artaxerxes Mnemon 46 years, B. C. 404-359,
 Artaxerxes Ochus 21 years, B. C. 358-338,
 Arocus (the name is variously given) 2 years, B. C. 337-336,
 Darius Codomannus 4 years, B. C. 335-332,
 Alexander the Great 8 years, B. C. 331-324.

This list follows Ptolemy's canon, omits several brief or contested reigns, and counts the years B. C. as if they began, like the years of the ancients, with the spring equinox. This is not the most accurate method for all purposes, but for cases where it will answer, it is much the simplest method.

1. With this table before us, we are ready to take up the first of the four epochs of post-exilic history, that which begins with the events recorded in the Sunday School Lesson from Ezra. My present opinion, subject to correction from evidence, is that the first year of Cyrus, as mentioned in this Lesson, was the third of the nine years commonly assigned to Cyrus, and was therefore B. C. 536, instead of B. C. 538. I think, therefore, that the seventy years of Jer. xxv., 11,

are an exact number, and not merely a round number, and that the correct understanding of the numbers in Daniel, above mentioned, is that which agrees with this view. No other date, however, depends upon the taking of this view.

If "the second year of their coming," the year in which the second temple was founded, was thus 535 B. C., it was 52 years, counting inclusively, from the year of the burning of the temple. A large number of old people, who had seen the first temple, may therefore have been present at the founding of the second.

Daniel had something to do with the return from the captivity. In the year 538 B. C. (Dan. ix.), he was studying "the books," and finding out in regard to Jeremiah's seventy years. Beyond this, we have no information as to the details of his agency in the matter. But it was in this, or in the following year, that the affair of the den of lions occurred (Dan. vi.), and we are told that Daniel was prosperous and influential (Dan. vi., 28). That his influence would be exerted in behalf of his people is a matter of course.

It is easy to understand the biblical narratives as teaching that Cyrus was a monotheist, and a worshiper of Jehovah, and they have been quite generally so understood. But this understanding of them is not necessarily the correct one; and inscriptions of his, which have been recovered, indicate that his respect for Jehovah sprang rather from worldly wisdom than from piety. What he did for Jehovah and his worshipers, he did for other gods and their worshipers. He counted it a good thing to have the good-will of the priests and devout persons of the different religions that existed among his subjects.

We must not make the mistake of supposing that the greater part of the exiled Jews returned to Palestine at once, as soon as Cyrus gave them leave. Several different returning expeditions are mentioned, with long intervals between them. Doubtless there were many others, great and small, which are not particularly mentioned. But the Book of Esther and the other later books of the Bible, as well as the testimony of non-biblical writers, all show that the Israelites who remained in the various provinces of the Persian empire were far more numerous and powerful than those who went to Palestine.

Ezra, let us understand, had nothing to do with this first return, except, perhaps, afterward to write the history of it. Probably he was not born when it took place. The leaders of it were Zerubbabel, of the royal blood of Judah, Jeshua the lineal high priest, and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. After the founding of the temple, the incident of the Lesson, things did not go smoothly with them. The mixed peoples inhabiting the neighboring regions wished to join them in their work, and being refused, made trouble for them. If Daniel died at about this time, the loss of his influence at the court of Cyrus must have been felt by his compatriots in Palestine. At all events, their enemies succeeded in hindering them, through the reign of Cyrus and of his successor Cambyses, whom (whatever the reason of it may be) the Book of Ezra calls Ahasuerus, that is Xerxes. Under Comates (called Artaxerxes in Ezra) the work was entirely stopped. It was resumed under Darius Hystaspis, and completed in the sixth year of his reign, B. C. 516, seventy years, not counted inclusively, after the first temple was burned, and either nineteen or twenty-one years after Zerubbabel laid its foundations. Such were the events of the first of the four epochs of post-exilic history. The account of them occupies the first six chapters of the Book of Ezra.

2. The second epoch is treated in the remaining four chapters of Ezra. It begins with the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, B. C. 458, some fifty-

eight years after the completing of the temple under Darius. Within these years occurred the reign of Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther; the Jews out of Palestine seem to have been greatly prospered; but for this whole time, the history of Palestine is an absolute blank. That the interval had not been one of obedience and prosperity is evident from the unhappy condition of affairs, as Ezra found them. The event of the second epoch is that Ezra went up from Babylon with a fresh band of colonists, and with an ample commission from the king, and undertook to infuse new life into the Jerusalem Jews, and to secure the more complete enforcement of the law among them. It is especially important to be clear in our understanding of the fact that Ezra's expedition was nearly eighty years later than Zerubbabel's, and belongs to an entirely different generation.

3. Most of the Book of Nehemiah, including both of the Sunday School Lessons from that book, is devoted to the events of the third epoch; which covers the twelve years of Nehemiah's first administration as governor, B. C. 445-433, from the twentieth to the thirty-second of Artaxerxes (Neh. v., 14 and parallel places). This epoch begins, therefore, thirteen years after the beginning of the previous one. Ezra was still in Palestine, engaged in the work he had undertaken there, as appears, for example, from Neh. viii., 2. But the state of things which made Nehemiah so anxious to go to Palestine, and that which he found when he reached Jerusalem, alike show that Ezra had not succeeded in his plans, and that Judea under his administration had met with severe misfortunes. Ezra and Nehemiah together accomplished what Ezra alone had found impossible. In the course of twelve years, the country was reduced to order, the enemies of the Jews baffled, the temple renewed, the city fortified, the Mosaic institutions everywhere put in force, and prosperity of all kinds restored.

The passage in Neh. viii.-x. is of especial interest on account of its connection with the traditions concerning the Great Synagogue. It also holds a prominent place in critical discussions, on account of its testimony to the state of a large portion of the writings of the Old Testament, at the time when this reading of the law took place. Chapter ix., for example, presupposes a large part of the Old Testament, and in the order in which the books now stand. Many other questions of equal interest find a part of their solution in these chapters, but we must pass them by.

4. We complete our task by glancing briefly at the fourth epoch of post-exilic history, as mentioned in the Book of Nehemiah. It needs the more careful notice, as it is commonly too much neglected by the men who have treated of these matters. This neglect may be partially accounted for by the fact that it is less prominently mentioned in the Bible text than are the other three epochs. Yet the last chapter of Nehemiah is mainly devoted to it, and something concerning it may be learned from the genealogical matter in Nehemiah and Chronicles. The epoch is important because of its connection with the closing of the Old Testament canon.

After twelve years, Nehemiah returned to Artaxerxes. Soon, however, it appeared that his work in Palestine was not yet stable enough to endure the test of his absence. After a time he came again to Palestine, where he had to fight many of his old battles over again. Some particulars concerning this epoch will naturally be brought to our attention when we reach the Lesson from the Book of Malachi. How long this second administration of Nehemiah lasted, we are not informed. Apparently it lasted long enough so that he reached permanent results; and the twelve years of his first administration had been insufficient for

accomplishing results that would be permanent. It may have lasted as many as forty or fifty years or more; since Nehemiah was a very young man when he first came to Jerusalem, and may have remained there, after his return, to the end of his life. If Nehemiah lived to complete the Books of Nehemiah and of Chronicles, he lived to make record of a registration of Levites which was undertaken as an official act of the reign of Darius Nothus, which included the name of Jaddua, who was high priest in the time of Alexander the Great, and which was completed during the high-priesthood of Jaddua's father Johanan. See Neh. XII., 23, 24. There is nothing incredible in the idea that he may have lived so long as this. The current opinion, I think, is different. It is that the Darius of Neh. XII., 22 is Codomannus, and that this registration was made long after Nehemiah died. But, with all deference to the many eminent scholars who hold this opinion, it is in absolute contradiction with many points in the evidence, and is distinctly untenable.

STUDIES IN ARCHÆOLOGY AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION.

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XIV.

THE IDEA OF REDEMPTION—SECOND ARTICLE.

In concluding what we have to say upon the subject introduced in the last of these studies, we notice a second idea of redemption, under which may be classed quite a different set of phenomena, as touching the views men have held in different ages and climes, and having reference much more than the one before noticed to the future life of the soul. We classify it as

II. THE JUDICIAL IDEA.

It is deserving of notice how much, in respect to what is here intended, the pagan thinker and devotee is sometimes found to be at one with the moralist and the rationalist of our own time, or of any previous one. I speak of that theory of human destiny, as regards the next life, which places man before God, when God is thus recognized at all, in the attitude of a claimant for the divine favor upon a plea of personal merit. *Quantum meruit*—this, we are even now often told, is the only ground upon which, consistently with self-respect, or with fundamental principles of right, man may ask approval and blessing, even of God. In some ancient religions this idea took the form of an actual balancing of the good and the ill in each man's character or life, with destiny decided as the one or the other scale should rise or fall. I call this, in each aspect of it, the judicial idea of redemption; perhaps with sufficient exactness to answer a present purpose.

There is something in man which makes this idea pleasing to him. It may be doubted if any other form of religious error has ever prevailed so widely, or has been able to put itself in such close alliance with certain phases of human culture. One of the forms which it assumes—and it is that which prevails to this day—is seen in a passage in Plato's "Republic." The aged Cephalus, in that part of the dialogue where the passage occurs, is discoursing with Socrates upon themes of this nature. He has just come in from sacrificing in the court of the dwelling where the party are met, in some of those acts of domestic worship cus-